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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/26/2017
TAGS: IZ MOPS PTER PREL PGOV
SUBJECT: ADM FALCON'S MARCH 26 MEETING WITH THE PRIME
MINISTER

Classified By: Charge Affaires Daniel Speckhard. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: During the March 26 meeting between Iraqi PM Maliki and CentCom Commander Admiral Fallon, the PM focused on our shared interests and the need to work together to achieve our mutual goals. He reaffirmed his commitment to defeat terrorism and expressed some hope that he was seeing some initial signs of success on the security side. First among these signs was the demonstrated loyalty and commitment of the armed forces to the country, and not to narrow sectarian interests. For Maliki, the joint security stations in Baghdad represented a better level of coordination among the Iraqi army and the police forces, as well as with Coalition Forces. Admiral Fallon stressed the urgency to move forward on multiple issues in the shortest time possible so that this progress could persuade the American people to remain patient. Maliki responded he understood that security alone was not sufficient and that his government had to make progress along three pillars: national reconciliation, improved security for the population, and economic movement, including the provision of public services. While agreeing that these were the key areas, Admiral Fallon re-emphasized that it was critical to show success quickly. END SUMMARY.

SIGNS OF HOPE

¶2. (S) In his initial meeting with Iraqi PM Maliki, CentCom Commander, Admiral William J. Fallon expressed his hope that the current U.S. efforts would provide Maliki the confidence to take on some of the hard challenges he is facing. Maliki responded that both countries agree on the need to defeat terrorism, and that he has been very reassured by the strong alliance between our two countries. "This is good for the world. While the price is heavy, it will be worth it. We must break terrorism." He added his hope that the policies of the U.S. will succeed.

¶3. (S) Maliki said that he sees some positive signs on the security front and hoped that these will continue. "Our forces are working in a manner that demonstrates loyalty and commitment to the country, and not just for one's own small interests." He claimed that the population was helping more these days to fight against Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and that there was improved coordination between Iraqi security forces and the Coalition. "I believe we're going to succeed. However, there remain some problems with the delivery of equipment and the need to get it here quickly." He said that he had raised this at high levels of the U.S. government to help expedite weapons deliveries.

¶4. (S) Maliki reiterated some of the progress that Iraq had

achieved on the political side -- the completion of the constitution, the successful elections, and establishment of the parliament (Council of Representatives). He hoped that Admiral Fallon's briefings and visits around Iraq had been going well, and that he had received a positive impression of what had been achieved. He acknowledged, though, that the Admiral had also probably heard some negative things.

"That's natural. But now I believe that there is a unified vision in Iraq against Al Qaeda and the militias, and in support of the military." On this latter, Maliki asserted that citizens were growing to trust the security forces and were helping them in their efforts. He noted that the people of Anbar, Diyala, and Baghdad were rising up to fight Al Qaeda. He also thought that coordination with the Coalition had improved the ISF capabilities.

THE SECURITY CHALLENGES

¶ 15. (S) Admiral Fallon agreed that Al Qaeda and the various militias are the most serious near-term threats. He added that he had been struck during his trip by the common understanding among Iraqi and Coalition leaders about the security challenges that they face. Admiral Fallon's interlocutors also expressed cautious optimism that the security trends have been moving in the right direction. Similarly, some of the average citizens Admiral Fallon has been able to approach on his walk through a Baghdad market seemed to have welcomed the presence of Coalition forces in their neighborhoods and were grateful that they could now more easily conduct their business. Admiral Fallon said that he hoped these trends would continue as more U.S. troops flow in for the surge. MNF-I Commander, General Petraeus, added that the situation should also improve with the addition of over 10,000 more Iraqi Security Forces personnel scheduled to graduate soon from the training academies.

¶ 16. (S) In addition to Al Qaeda and its Sunni extremist supporters, and the militias (particularly Jaysh al-Mahdi), Maliki said that he would add the Saddamists as the principle security challenges facing Iraq. Maliki claimed that the Saddamists supported groups on both sides of the ethno-sectarian divide. National Security Advisor Rubaie said that he would add members of organized crime to the list, too. Petraeus said that the Iranian Quds Force should also be considered a significant threat, noting that it also supported both sides in the ethno-sectarian conflict. Arguing that the Iranians would try to hurt anything that supported U.S. interests, Maliki said that he had asked the U.S. to "please try" to solve its problems with Iran so that Iraq could avoid being drawn into this potential conflict.

¶ 17. (S) Despite the increased coordination between MNF-I and the ISF, Maliki said that there were still a few issues between them which needed to be resolved, such as when U.S. weapons Iraq had requested (M-16s and M-4s) would be delivered. He noted that he had raised this issue with the White House. Petraeus said that MNSTC-I Commander, General Dempsey, would brief the Prime Minister on the status of the equipment deliveries later in the week.

URGENT NEED FOR PROGRESS

¶ 18. (S) Admiral Fallon impressed upon Maliki the importance of making near-term progress in the political and economic spheres to support the war effort. These spheres needed to be addressed in parallel with work in the security sphere. Maliki agreed, noting that his government was focused on three main pillars: national reconciliation, security, and the economy and services. But this will require some patience because Iraq was going through big changes that would take time as well as a step-by-step approach to manage. He said that the political process has been born, but would now have to be nurtured. Maliki said the legacy of the Saddam years had sown the seeds of the present ethno-sectarian conflict by propagating the notion that one sect should dominate. Maliki said that the divisions within

the country as how to deal with the Baathists created further problems. He hoped that the draft DeBaathification law (agreed to that day by the PM and President) would be able to walk the tight rope between the two extremes of "killing them all" or "bringing them all in." While acknowledging these challenges and reaffirming U.S. support, Admiral Fallon stressed the need to make progress very quickly across all three pillars because time was of the essence. He concluded by urging Maliki to work diligently with General Petraeus inside the country, while concurrently he would try to maximize external support for Iraq from within the region.

¶9. (U) This cable has been cleared by Admiral Fallon.
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